

Election 2018

For a democracy to function all of its citizens need to participate, and one vital way of participating is choosing our leaders. This guide highlights the issues that should be considered when deciding who to vote for.

All of the information in this guide comes from documents and statements from various bishop conferences, popes and Vatican II. Due to the amount of space available some formatting and editing has occurred. All of the original documents are available via the internet.

Voting is a privilege that generations of Americans have fought for, and many have died for. We honor their sacrifice by taking our right to vote seriously. Vote this November 6th.

Guiding Principals

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.¹

Everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).

1. "Whatever is opposed to life itself" (murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, suicide)
2. "Whatever violates the integrity of the human person" (mutilation, torture, coercion)
3. "Whatever insults human dignity" (subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery and human trafficking, prostitution)
4. "Disgraceful working conditions" that exploit and dehumanize the worker

They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator. ²

The Issues

Environment

The earth is God's gift to us. Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good, destined for all, by preventing anyone from using 'with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate—animals, plants, the natural elements—simply as one wishes, according to one's own

¹ Mark 12:31

² Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium Et Spes), Par 27, Pope Paul VI, 12/7/65

economic needs.³ “The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility.”⁴

Healthcare

Health care is an essential good for every human person. In a society like ours, no one should lack access to decent health care.⁵

Health is not a consumer good, but rather a universal right, and therefore access to health care services cannot be a privilege.⁶

War

The amount of money spent annually on war exceeds 1.7 trillion dollars, 41% of which is spent by the United States. What if an equal amount was spent in securing peace? “Justice, then, right reason and consideration for human dignity and life urgently demand that the arms race should cease, that the stockpiles which exist in various countries should be reduced equally and simultaneously by the parties concerned, that nuclear weapons should be banned, and finally that all come to an agreement on a fitting program of disarmament, employing mutual and effective controls.”⁷

Gun Violence

With regard to the regulation of firearms, first, the intent to protect one's loved ones is an honorable one, but simply put, guns are too easily accessible. The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in their document, "The International Arms Trade (2006)," emphasized the importance of enacting concrete controls on handguns, for example, noting that "limiting the purchase of such arms would certainly not infringe on the rights of anyone."⁸

Income Inequality

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner, and that we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone.⁹

From the perspective of the Church's social teaching, what is desperately needed is a complete re-orientation of economic life away from the obsessive focus on profits that leads to the manipulation and exploitation of workers; the use of “growth” and GDP as the prime measure of economic success; the dominance of an under-regulated financial sector; the cynical exploitation of consumerism and a decadent culture; and the use of the regulatory system to reward the monopolistic tendencies of powerful businesses, to punish others, or to thwart competition.¹⁰

³ The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2005 (no. 466)

⁴ Encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) June, 2009 by Pope Benedict XXVI

⁵ The Value of Work; The Dignity of the Human Person, Labor Day Statement by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops 9/7/09

⁶ Address by Pope Francis to Doctors with Africa (CUAMM) on May 7, 2016

⁷ Encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth") April, 1963 by Pope John XXIII

⁸ Statement by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 12/21/12

⁹ *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI, 6/29/09

¹⁰ Labor Day Statement, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013.

Poverty/Hunger

“Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18)

Pope Francis, in his First World Day of the Poor¹¹ address, explained the words of Saint John The Apostle: “The seriousness with which the ‘beloved disciple’ hands down Jesus’ command to our own day is made even clearer by the contrast between the empty words so frequently on our lips and the concrete deeds against which we are called to measure ourselves.”¹²

There is no escaping the reality that the poor, the disabled, children and senior citizens, in the richest country in the world, will suffer more because of deep cuts and adjustments to programs that will affect Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security programs and benefits. These cuts will be felt in our own community and in our own families.

The cuts will instead pay for huge tax breaks, which will primarily help the rich and corporations, and which the Congressional Budget Office estimates will cause the federal deficit to grow to 1.5 trillion dollars.

Principles of Catholic Social Justice Teaching

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's Creation

¹¹ The “World Day of the Poor,” observed on the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary time, established by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia et Misera*, 11/20/16.

¹² Message of Pope Francis, First World Day of the Poor, 11/19/17